

## **Harmonious inner and outer Climates**

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### **Research question**

How can the inner climate of the body help harmonise the outer climate of earth ?

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## Abstract

### *on the inner climate of the body*

This study investigates the relationship between the inner experiences of the human body and the state of balance of earth's climate. The current state of the earth is worsening and the current way of living is not sustainable, climate change wise but also health and mental health wise. Changes need to be made to the way humans live their lives, for (mental) health, environment and survival of all beings.

There are three stages in which this research takes place: meeting, befriending and becoming. The *meeting* chapter looks at the human body experiences of breathing, emotions and (graceful) movement and what these mean in relation-

ship with environmental awareness. During *befriending* we dive into the human body's microbiome, neurodiversity, mental illness, burn out, education and war and how these influence the climate crisis. The last chapter called *becoming*, looks into the philosophy of time and space in relationship with environmentalism and viewing the earth as one's own body.

The three stages are designed to help us understand the relationship to the disturbance of the climate and our role in it. The research looks into methods to become aware of one's body. For instance, Just being—breathing—gives the body and its microbiome time to heal. Another method being zooming out and metaphorically seeing the human bodies as the microbiome of earth.

The thesis concludes that by healing one's own inner body, it can heal the outer climate.

In summary the thesis finds that, just like with our own body, earth knows best what she needs. Going slower, feeling instead of rationalising, resting and meditation, with its many health benefits well documented in science (Jamil, 2023)<sup>1</sup>, can heal the human body, the microbial body and the earth body.

So, how can the inner climate help harmonise the outer climate?

*By coming home to the body.*

1 Jamil, A. (2023, June 19). *Meditation and Its Mental and Physical Health Benefits in 2023*. NCBI. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10355843/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10355843/)

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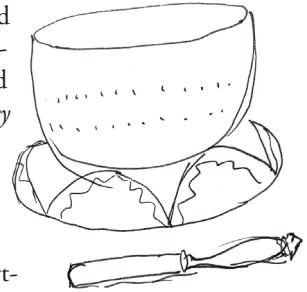


## Introduction

I am walking through a half-dark and silent hallway. On my right, I am passing an old jade plant that is taller than I am myself. Ahead I hear footsteps touching the ground lightly but deliberately up the hallway. A glimpse of black robe flutters before me until it disappears around the corner. I follow.

The rhythmic sound of wood on wood beckons me to make the journey towards the now louder and louder sound, until I reach the source. A monk is hammering the signal onto the traditional timber plank next to an entranceway. I have heard it many times. My body moves without thinking through the entrance. I bow to the Buddha statue that greets the practitioners stepping foot into the meditation

hall towards my meditation cushion. I try to focus on my breath, listening to the shuffling footsteps of the other scattered and confronted minds entering the room. The rhythmic sounds end with two loud bangs. The abbot walks in and offers incense to Manjushri, sitting on a lion with a sword in its hand. The bodhisatva that tames the mind and cuts through delusions. *Every move is purposeful until also she sits down in stillness.* A gorgeous bell resonates through the entire space. Morning meditation has started. It's time to experience my rabbit holes.



I didn't start living at a monastery because I thought it would be fun. It wasn't really fun to be honest. But it was necessary. In fact, I was in desperate need. As a 20-year-old, I cracked after 3 years of exponentially worsening mental illness. I remember the day that I decided to do something about it. A heaviness came over my body and I realised I couldn't walk anymore. I sat down. Until sitting was too strenuous. Then, laying down became hard, *as every breath became a conscious effort*. Until that was too much. The heaviness pressed me into complete darkness. I got sucked into a force that was the weight of the world pressing on my chest. All there was, was an all consuming void like a black hole and then there was nothing.

But I came back. With the thought "O, so it's not yet over." And so I survived a near-death experience. Every breath moving on reminded me there was only one way to go: live.

Psychoses made it very hard for me and my environment. And I knew I needed to find a place to live. The mental hospital my despaired parents sought out would have surely killed me. The defeat of not living my own truth would have been unbearable to me. I knew exactly what I needed: quiet and stillness. Because deep down I felt I needed to regain equilibrium and do whatever possible to face what was growing and growing inside. A terrifying thing I had been suppressing for years on end. A dangerous thing that I could only face in the ease I found in the meditation hall. And so, sitting on the meditation cushion I felt it boiling up, higher and higher to the surface. The most terrible and atrocious things. From the rabbit holes inside me, it came boiling over:

*my emotions.*

As a child I learned, as all other children, from my surroundings and the belief of my up-bringers. I learned there was no space to express what I really felt. During the hormone rollercoaster of puberty I came to the conclusion that my emotions became too big and scary. Thus to control them, I stopped eating. If you don't eat, you don't feel. "Maybe that would make me fit into society where I shouldn't express how I feel, sit still like the educational system wants me to, and fit the unreachable beauty standard" were my unconscious thoughts. Eating disorders are a common aim of young people nowadays to find control over their life. Research done in 2020, found that 1 in 5 adolescents finds themselves struggling with obsessing over food, calories and their own body image (Vandeputte, 2022).<sup>2</sup>

Plus, the world is depleting. We are over consuming the

2 Vandeputte, A. (2022, October 2). *Weetikveel*. VRT max Radio 1. Retrieved September 9, 2023, from [www.vrt.be/vrtmax/podcasts/radio1/-/weetikveel/10/eetstoornissen/](http://www.vrt.be/vrtmax/podcasts/radio1/-/weetikveel/10/eetstoornissen/)

earth. I had continued subconscious thoughts, such as "I should be eating less, and if I eat even less I lower my ecological footprint more than anybody else. So, at least I'm doing one thing good". Thinking life was wasteful resulted in trying to not live. I would die for the earth.

I have lots of flaws and problems that occur among stressed and burning out young adults like me, living in a society that is built on competition, individualism and exploitation. I learned that thinking was supreme above all else, and definitely above movement, emotion or relaxation. Educational and work related systems capitalise on this belief. Mental illness, addiction, exhaustion, fertility issues: it is more common than not to experience these at some point in your life. For many it became a default mode. Just like the state of the earth, humans lost their natural balance.

I have been climate concerned and compassionate toward the earth for as long as I can remember. Which gives me the motivation to look for a way out of the mess.

This thesis researches how balancing the inner climate –the physical and mental health, thoughts and emotions– can balance the outer climate –environmental awareness and contribute to addressing the climate crisis. I will be zooming in and out on the perspective that people globally overexert themselves and therefore exhaust earth itself. By influencing inner health and listening to emotions, we can reverse the damage to the planet. Reversing damage not only in the human body, but also of the creatures that make up the human body and the human bodies that together are part of earth. I will explore these by going through three stages: **meeting** (climate), **befriending** (climate) and **becoming** (climate). The following paragraphs will elaborate on this.



This quote is from an apology letter to the climate written by the artists Una Chaudhuri, Fritz Ertl, Oliver Kellhammer and Marina Zurkow for the exposition “Dear Climate” (The New York Public Library, 2016).<sup>4</sup> This exhibition explored human connection with animals, plants and the weather using human interaction, environmental studies, land art and theatre. What resonates with me is the way of approaching the subject. Not only looking to make changes in practical matters, but also in the thought patterns and perception of individuals. Change starts with changing your thoughts. This is why I appreciate the method of the artist’s collective on Climate Change:

*“We’d like to make amends, to start by shifting relations: with you, with other species, and with our own tempestuous, impetuous inner climates, too.” (Davis, 2015, p. 317)<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Davis, H. (2015). *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (H. Davis & E. Turpin, Eds.; page 324). Open Humanities Press.

What stands out to me the most about this is the non-rational approach to the topic. This is about opening up on an intuitive level and making intimate contact with the topic. By sensing and truly feeling what it means to be part of this world, I imagine a way to make the current one-sided method of rational and mathematical way of looking at climate change, crossing “clear” boundaries, get individuals thinking about what we believe we are and what we are not. What do you feel connected with? Where does your body end?

<sup>4</sup> The New York Public Library. (2016, June 4). *Dear Climate* | Una Chaudhuri, Fritz Ertl, Oliver Kellhammer, Marina Zurkow | An Artist Dialogue Series Event. The New York Public Library. Retrieved September 17, 2023, from [www.nypl.org/events/programs/2016/06/04/dear-climate-una-chaudhuri-fritz-ertl-oliver-kellhammer-marina-zurkow](http://www.nypl.org/events/programs/2016/06/04/dear-climate-una-chaudhuri-fritz-ertl-oliver-kellhammer-marina-zurkow)

*“Underneath lie three “movements of mind”:*

*Meeting Climate Change, Befriending Climate Change, and Becoming Climate Change.*

*When you make an acquaintance with something, you invite it into your mental world.*

*Then it’s only a matter of time before you get to know it better. The imagination gets seriously involved now, the conversation deepens, the plot thickens. Being hospitable—truly hospitable—involves opening oneself to the unknown, and the gifts of the guest can change the host profoundly. Becoming follows. Becoming disturbs the existing set-up, crosses “clear” boundaries, confuses convenient categories.”(Davis, 2015)<sup>5</sup>*

5            Davis, H. (2015). *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (H. Davis & E. Turpin, Eds.; page 324). Open Humanities Press.

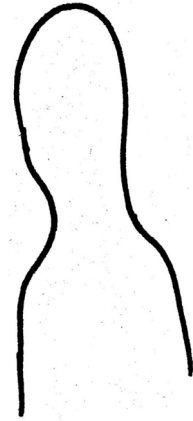
These three stages are the guiding chapters through this thesis. When we **meet** our own struggles and tempestuous, stormy, natural disastrous inner climates, start **befriending** these emotional, mental, spiritual and bodily tensions, we can, like Mahatma Gandhi said, **become** the change we like to see in the world. The original quote by Mahatma Gandhi:

*“We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.”(Morton, 2011)<sup>6</sup>*

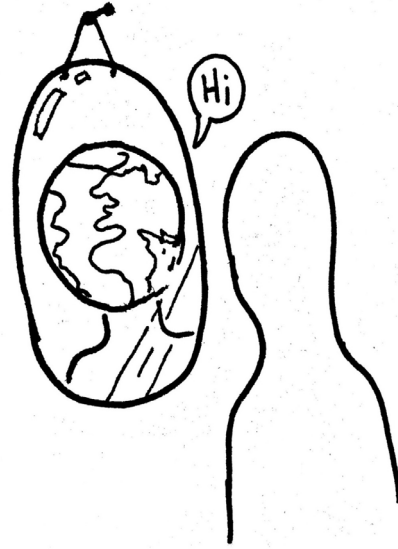
This passage was written in 1913 and thereby I like to update the usage of the word “man” and “him” to *humans* and *them*. Gandhi pointed out the significance of what he calls *divine mystery*. This is what the artists of “Dear Climate” a hundred years later, might have described as crossing “*clear*” boundaries. As Gandhi spoke these words, it is today’s society that is the mirror of his actions.

<sup>6</sup> Morton, B. (2011, August 29). Opinion | Falser Words Were Never Spoken. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/30/opinion/falser-words-were-never-spoken.html>









Perception is a crucial point in being able to make a change. “Change your thoughts, and you change the world”, words from Norman Vincent Peale, author of the book *The Power of Positive Thinking* (Peale, 1952).<sup>7</sup> Calming thoughts creates a calm planet. I like to imagine, if every human on earth would meditate for 1 minute, hypothetically, that minute there would be complete peace on earth. No climate disruption. Although in reality, in that minute over a 100 people would have died (Medindia Content Team, 2022),<sup>8</sup> new humans being born, and thus the ever going stream on life continues with ups and downs, and therefore might never be at peace. Though, wouldn't the climate issue be non-existent if humans would meditate instead of contributing to war and capitalism?

In my early teens, I first heard of a particular activist perfor-

<sup>7</sup> Peale, N. V. (1952). *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Prentice-Hall.

mance that would make its way into the deeper structures of my brain to stay there: the Bed-In.



<sup>8</sup> Medindia Content Team. (2022, February 23). *World Death Clock*. Medindia. Retrieved October 14, 2023, from [www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/world-death-clock.asp](http://www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/world-death-clock.asp)

March 1969, artists Yoko Ono and John Lennon used the press interests in their honeymoon as a way to protest against the war in Vietnam. A whole week they invited the press into the Amsterdam Hilton hotel in what they called a ‘bed-in for peace’

(National Museums Liverpool, 2019).<sup>9</sup> A seemingly strange action, but it does make sense: not contributing in war lays an end to war. War is extremely destructive for plants, animals, the climate and humankind. Releasing the thoughts of (self-)hate is the key to eliminating hate in the world. The internationally signed climate agreement at the Conference of Parties (CoP) in



<sup>9</sup> National Museums Liverpool. (2019, may 20). John and Yoko's bed in. National Museums Liverpool. Retrieved October 15, 2023, from [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/john-and-yokos-bed](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/john-and-yokos-bed)

Paris on December 12th 2015 (Nederlandse Emissieautoriteit, n. d.)<sup>10</sup> shows that global agreement is possible. Disagreement and disease (dis-ease) can be overcome.



<sup>10</sup> Nederlandse emissieautoriteit. (n.d.). Klimaatakkoord van Parijs. Nederlandse Emissieautoriteit. Retrieved September 17, 2023, from [www.emissieautoriteit.nl/onderwerpen/klimaatakkoord-van-parijs](http://www.emissieautoriteit.nl/onderwerpen/klimaatakkoord-van-parijs)

## Meeting



Starting with becoming aware of our own tempestuous, blustery, turbulent inner climates, this chapter explores meeting inside experiences.

To explore inner experiences, we need to be alive. For human beings, this requires certain basic needs. Besides shelter, food and water, one need is most important for experiencing climates to begin with: air to breath.

How you breathe is how you feel. Breathing slowly makes one calm and relaxed. Rapid breathing is the physiology of stress. Oxygen goes to the muscles instead of the organs and digestion, creating muscle tension like shoulder and

neck pain, digestive distress and rapid heart beat. All because the body breathes fast. If you can't breathe slower, you are always tense. Your body is in a constant stress mode. Nevertheless, stress is important. Without it, we could not adapt to changing circumstances like heat, cold, injury and danger, according to Rübén Spapens, co-founder of *Lekker Ademen* (Spapens, 2023)<sup>11</sup>.

Pamela J. Free, a Feldenkrais Method® practitioner and writer of a workbook for women that for me holds a lot of insights, says that breathing is of vital importance to us and yet we are usually not aware of our breathing. The quality of our breathing determines how lively, how awake, how cheerful we are and even how interesting our lives are. !!!!!!!!!!!

<sup>11</sup> Spapens, R. (2023). *Lekker Ademen*. LinkedIn. Retrieved October 17, 2023, from [www.linkedin.com/company/lekker-ademen](http://www.linkedin.com/company/lekker-ademen)

*“If we can learn to breathe out completely and consciously, we come to realise how true it is that we must let go of things before we can truly begin again.” (Free, 1998, p. 47)<sup>12</sup>.*

Scientific experiments show that not fully exhaling, induces anxiety (Peper, et al., 1993)<sup>13</sup>. There are many breath techniques to reduce anxiety, such as box breathing (4-4-4-4 or square breathing), belly breathing, 4-7-8 breathing, deep breathing and ancient yogic breath work like Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing), Bhramari pranayama (bee breathing), Kapalabhati Pranayama (skull shining breath). From personal experience I came to realise that reducing anxiety and feeling more safe in the world is essential for clearer thinking and facilitating more effective decision-making. This helps me to make space to address my personal environmental awareness. As individuals become

12 Free, P. J. (1998). *De wijsheid van je lichaam (chapter Breathing)*. Ankh-Hermes bv, Deventer.

13 Peper, E., & MacHose, M. (1993). *Symptom prescription: Inducing anxiety by 70% exhalation. Biofeedback and self-regulation*, 18, 133-139.

more centred and focused on the present moment, they are less likely to engage in impulsive, wasteful, or destructive behaviours. By fostering a deeper connection with themselves, people tend to consume more mindfully, make better decisions, and avoid excessive consumption. In this way, graceful movement indirectly curtails the excessive exploitation of natural resources.

There are lots of breathing techniques that improve the relation and awareness of the inner experiences. While most people are getting overstimulated by many factors, myself included, we forget that the pleasure and comfort we seek is going through our nostrils into our chest. Breathing will not improve climate change, but it can be a helpful tool for

promoting mindfulness and reducing stress, which, in turn, can contribute to greater climate awareness and action. It feels very good. I would like to invite you to rest your awareness on your breath. How is its quality? Are you breathing shallow, high in our chest? Are you breathing deep, slow, from your belly? Are you starting to breathe differently now you are aware of it? How does your body feel during breathing? Are you holding tension? Where? When you became aware of it, did you notice you adjusted yourself? Dropped your tense shoulders perhaps? Breathing is the greatest gift of life and the start to every change.

Starting with the breath, we can start to look to the inner consciousness of the human body: emotions. A thing I have learned to suppress growing up. According to Oxford Languages, the definition of an *emotion* is “a strong feel-

14 Oxford Languages. (2023). Oxford Languages and Google - English. Retrieved September 24, 2023, from [languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/](https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/)

ing deriving from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.” (Oxford Languages, 2023)<sup>14</sup>. The origin of the word comes from French *émouvoir*, which is based on “Latin *ēmōtus*, past participle of *ēmoveō* (“to move out, move away, remove, stir up, irritate”)” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).<sup>15</sup> It seems like emotions are meant *to be stirred up* and *move out* between body and environment (circumstances), inner body experiences (mood) and between bodies (relationships).

“E-motions are energy in motion. If they are not expressed, the energy is repressed. As energy it has to go somewhere. Emotional energy moves us as does all energy (...) To deny emotion is to deny the ground and vital energy of our life” as John Bradshaw states (John Bradshaw Media Group, n.d.).<sup>16</sup> If we take this definition of emotion and explana-

15 Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Emotion. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved September 24, 2023, from [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emotion)

16 John Bradshaw Media Group. (n.d.). John Bradshaw. John Bradshaw. Retrieved September 24, 2023, from [www.johnbradshaw.com](https://www.johnbradshaw.com)



tion about the universal energy that drives all human bodies as true, a strong feeling about one's circumstances, mood and relationships is *energy expressing itself*. When I was suffering from anorexia I was trying to suppress emotions that I didn't learn to deal with, thus denying my vital energy of life. Telling myself my actions were benefitting the climate, because yes, being alive is the most polluting factor in life.

Besides being *energy in motion*, emotion is also a way to communicate. The fascinating thing is that, although we do learn several culturally determined emotional behaviours in life, there is an underlying understanding in expressing emotions. From the moment a human is born, they start learning about how facial and bodily expression moves energies through the body. Emeritus professor and psychologist

Ad Vingerhoets, describes in his book *De emotionele mens* (*The emotional human*) the still face experiment, which illustrates the crucial role of emotional expressions in human interactions. In this experiment, a mother engages with her baby in a normal and affectionate manner but abruptly stops responding at the experimenter's command, leaving her face expressionless. The baby's immediate distress and crying demonstrates the significance of emotional expressions in social interactions (Vingerhoets, 2021).<sup>17</sup> Children learn to communicate with their outer environment with their emotional expression.

"The child in us often fears that our anger or sadness is bottomless and endless, but if we engage in this processing, if we go far enough we can always get to the bottom." (Free, 1998, p. 98-101)<sup>18</sup> Pamela J. Free reflects on the child inside

17 Vingerhoets, A. (2021). *De emotionele mens: Waarom onze emoties bepalen wie we zijn*. Ambo/Anthos B.V.

18 Free, P. J. (1998). *De wijsheid van je lichaam: Een werkboek voor vrouwen* (1st ed., Vol. 1) [Book], pagina 98-101. Ankh-Hermes bv, Deventer. ISBN: 90 202 7683 2. Nederlandse vertaling

of us that fears emotions. If humans do not learn how to go through emotional experiences in a way a healthy adult would, humans will come to face blockages. Blocking them out with overworking, eating, drinking, other addictions and in my personal case, adding an element of not eating for a deadly cocktail of the burnout recipe book. What I find interesting is her mention of going *into the bottom of an emotion* (Free, 1998, p. 95). I think we are all familiar with how music can help us get there. Everyone who listens to music knows how it can evoke all sorts of emotions. Feeling sad, and listening to music that induces a sad feeling, can help to go to the full expression of the emotion. This is because human species are copycat's. Mirror neurons in the brain are the reason humans can have empathy for the suffering of other people - we think to know what they go through - because we are literally experiencing the same feel-

ings ourselves. Why is it that when we watch a movie, a theatre play or read a book, we can fully give ourselves over to emotions in the heartfelt moments? It's because mirror neurons re-create the emotion we can hear, see on the screen, stage or words expressed by the artists (Iacoboni, 2009, p. 4-5).<sup>19</sup> This is how we learn to connect and understand each other. The author of the book *Mirroring People*, Marco Iacoboni, would argue that this possibly is the basis for morality. How would this understanding and connection change if humans could feel this empathy for the earth itself? Would anything change if humans, tormented when seeing the wounds on her body, could cry for the pain in earth's heart and disgust of ourselves by the harm we do to her? Would our morality be able to change from the exploitation of capitalism to a harmony seeking, respectful sharing between all living beings? Could this end the climate crisis, slavery, war

19 Iacoboni, M. (2009). *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others*, page 4-5. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

and bring nature, equality and peace? These are ambitious goals, but I truly wish that, one day, no living being would intentionally harm another.

In essence, emotions are key to social connections and understanding. In modern society, we do not always express our true feelings. This affects our inner experiences in a negative way, creating unhealthy habits. It creates stagnation between one's own body-mind connections and those with others. How would it be, if we would learn to communicate more emotional expression than currently socialised? It may result in more deeply rooted understanding between humans, thus creating more potential of understanding the outer climates needs.

Part of why the earth is this much out of balance is related

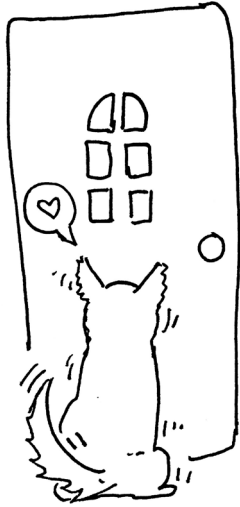
to today's sedentary lifestyle, in my perspective. As children, humans are very moveable. Bodies run, fool around, fidget and when being awake, they do not have a moment of sitting still. Now, try and remember your first days of school and you got told to sit still on a little chair behind a little desk, not allowed to speak unless you got permission to. How did you like that? Have you put that memory away? Sitting still, straight up, paying attention, no slouching, stop squirming, no talking, no giggling, take things seriously, these are all things that do not teach children how to emotionally deal with what is happening inside their bodies. Accumulating knowledge is excessively revered and glorified. By putting the intellectual mind on a pedestal it has been made more important than feeling and moving. Which has negative effects on well-being.

“By moving, we encourage all autonomous body systems –immune system, digestive system, lymphatic system, endocrine system, etc.– to dance more energetically and lively to their own rhythm.” Pamela Free writes (Free, 1998, p. 38).<sup>20</sup> Movement gives the body more energy. Based on my analysis, movement has —besides all of the physical, mental and emotional benefits— benefits for learning and working. Learning how to move is a simple way to change your life. Studies have shown that new movements change the density and neural pathways of the brain, enhancing physical abilities, improving cognitive functions, reducing stress, and promoting adaptability (May, 2011).<sup>21</sup> Due to the physical and mental improvements, movement is part of the solution to find balance within one’s body.

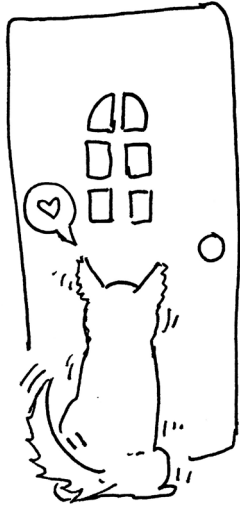
20 Free, P. J. (1998). *De wijsheid van je lichaam* (pagina 38).

*Ankh-Hermes bv, Deventer.*

21 May, A. (2011). *Neuroplasticity: Changes in grey matter induced by training. Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience, 13(4), 413-421.*



*A way to balance heightened emotions is, as Taylor swift would say, “shaking it off” (Swift, 2014).<sup>22</sup>*



22      *Swift, T. (2014, August 18). Taylor Swift - Shake It Off. YouTube. Retrieved October 10, 2023, from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nf-Wlot6h\\_JM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nf-Wlot6h_JM)*

The muscle spasms remove tension and thereby the trauma of the event (Berceli, 2015).<sup>23</sup> It's a practice deeply ingrained in our DNA. We have the same stress responses as fellow mammals. Shaking is a call to the needs of the nervous system in a state of 'fight or flight' or the sympathetic nervous system. Literally shaking, or running can answer the call of the stress hormones (adrenaline / cortisol). The movement makes the body process the stress response and bring calm and relaxation (endorphins after sports for example). But somewhere down the line we stopped practising shaking. Most people agree that this practice sounds very logical, rational and effective, according to my research. Although, little research is done to scientifically prove it. Nevertheless, there are many movement practices that have been practised for thousands of years to encourage internal healing that include shaking as part of their practice. Tai Chi and yoga to

<sup>23</sup> Berceli, D. (2015). *Shake It Off Naturally: Reduce Stress, Anxiety, and Tension With [TRE]*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

name a couple well known ones. Another practice I would like to mention is Qi Gong. Qi Gong is estimated to be a 4000 years old practice from ancient China. This practice is considered a health system, where Tai Chi is a martial art and yoga created for yogi's so they may be able to sit in seated meditation for hours as yoga is a spiritual practice at base (Boaventura et al., 2022).<sup>24</sup>

Qi Gong involves movement exercises and is one of the four main branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Disturbances in the body's meridians that arise throughout our lives as a result of poor nutrition, sedentary lifestyle, injuries, surgeries, ageing and *suppressing of emotions*. The purpose of Qi Gong is to correct these blockages. This enables the body to strengthen and regulate the internal organs, nervous system and immune system. It relieves pain, regulates

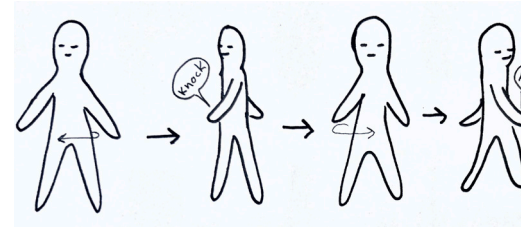
<sup>24</sup> Boaventura, P., Jaconiano, S., & Ribeiro, F. (2022, July 3). *Yoga and Qigong for Health: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* NCBI. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9312231/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9312231/)

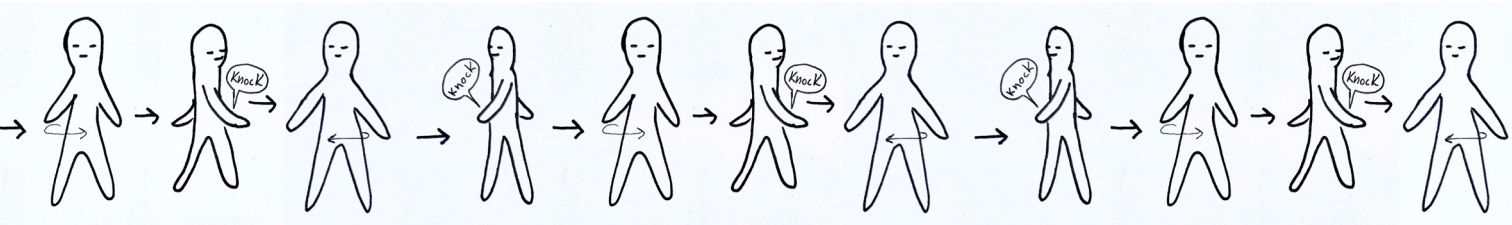


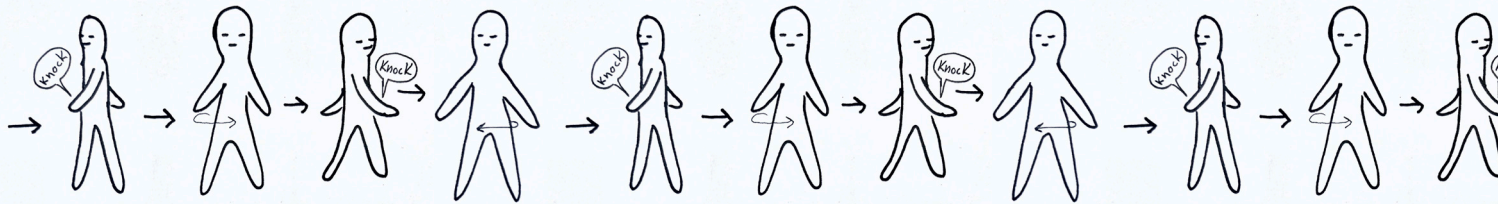
hormones, strengthens and releases stress and *deep-seated emotions* (Schutte, 2023).<sup>25</sup> What speaks to me most in the context of this thesis is the connection this practice makes between energy and emotions. Interestingly, there is a lot of evidence based scientific research on the effects and health benefits of Qi Gong. I am writing this paragraph knowing I have been sitting statically for too long, as it is recommended to stand up and stretch every 30 minutes. I invite you to do this with me to do so promptly. Let's do a fun move from the Qigong tradition Knocking on Heaven's Door (Tucker, 2020).<sup>26</sup> bend your legs a bit and imagine a string on the crown or you head holding you up. Now imagine your arms are noodles and move your upper body from left to right, knocking with your arms on your body. What do you think of it? How does it feel? Do you feel an emotional switch?

25 Schutte, L. (2023, October 3). *Wat is het verschil tussen Qigong oefeningen en Medische Qigong*. YinYangBalance. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from [mailchi.mpl/7563a19d0a9d/yinyang-balance-nieuws-brief-zomer-13921524?e=6817dfab62](mailto:mailchi.mpl/7563a19d0a9d/yinyang-balance-nieuws-brief-zomer-13921524?e=6817dfab62)

26 Tucker, J. (2020, November 27). *Three Swings Qigong (Knocking On Heaven's Door) | Qigong for Seniors | Qigong for Beginners*. YouTube. Retrieved October 20, 2023, from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaJrWX\\_3Ncc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaJrWX_3Ncc)







Pamela J. Free writes about how there are very few humans who think they move in a way that is graceful: a soft, gentle, smooth, relaxed and attractive way. Grace would be a wonderful thing to cultivate for individuals, as we as humans are attracted to these. I would agree that the rigid movements that we tend to use in our day to day lives are repulsive. The image of soldiers marching gives me a feeling of intimidation, hostility and fear.

My conclusion from this is that autonomous decisions on behalf of the well being of one's inner and outer climate becomes harder when bodies do not breathe and move freely. Pamela Free also mentions that there is no way to feel grace from outside, from thinking. It takes practice to constantly be present in the body, releasing thoughts, and stop trying to think your way into it. It takes a lot of unlearning from the currently common practices in our society and previous

*According to Free, when we don't feel safe, we can't exhale properly, tense up and retreat into a little safety zone somewhere in our minds and leave our bodies out there in the world to figure it out for ourselves. This way we become clumsier and we're going to move like puppets (Free, 1998, p. 39).<sup>27</sup>*

experiences — in which overstimulation of brain knowledge is the norm— but if we do find our way back *home to the body*, it will be effortless.

<sup>27</sup> Free, P.J. (1998). *De wijsheid van je lichaam* (pagina 39). Ankh-Hermes bv, Deventer.

One of the key ways in which graceful movement practices indirectly benefit the planet is through stress reduction. In today's fast-paced, highly interconnected world, stress levels are soaring, leading to a range of physical and mental health issues. As previously mentioned, adopting practices such as tai chi, yoga, or mindful walking, individuals can regain a sense of inner calm and balance. This reduction in stress has a profound ripple effect. As individuals become more centred and focused on the present moment, they are less likely to engage in impulsive, wasteful, or destructive behaviours. By fostering a deeper connection with themselves, people tend to consume more mindfully, make better decisions, and avoid excessive consumption. In this way, graceful movement indirectly curtails the excessive exploitation of natural resources.

The idea that graceful movement can indirectly benefit the planet might at first appear abstract, but it is rooted in the profound interconnectedness of life. By reducing stress, enhancing empathy, and improving physical and mental health, individuals can trigger a series of positive consequences that extend to society and the environment. The choice to move more graciously and gently in our bodies not only fosters individual well-being but also contributes to a more sustainable, harmonious planet for all its inhabitants.

I invite you to experience grace and elegance in your own life. We can practise with a movement you make daily: by picking up a cup. Preferably one made of paper or another material that is not fragile.

Firstly, pick it up a second time with as much force and power you have and put it down again. How does it feel different? Are you clenching your teeth, tightening your neck and shoulders, contracting your face in a grimace?

Secondly, try to pick up and put down the cup as carefully and softly as possible. At what point does trying to do it carefully become an effort?

This movements are just like how shouting and whispering cost more effort than talking then talking normally.

Now, think about the words 'gracious' and 'elegant' while you try it for a third time.

Is there a difference in the way you move?

Is grace not precisely the absence of effort?

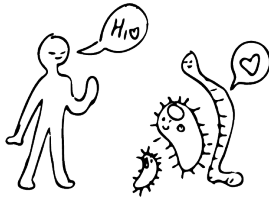
A flowing stream of natural movement?

*“The ideal movement is one that uses all the muscles required for that movement and no more.”*  
(Free, 1998, p. 38).

### **Meeting - Summary**

This chapter discussed different methods to become aware of your inner experiences. From awareness of the body breathing, taking this awareness to include the sensation of emotions, through the body moving in different ways: these methods can provide a way into harmony with once bodily sensations. This harmony is the first step to a greater consciousness.

### Befriending



This next chapter moves further to a greater consciousness, exploring being in harmony with the environment that surrounds. By befriending atmospheres beyond our within the physical body, one can learn to understand the needs of the other.

Not showing frustration at work, suppressing irritation and not letting emotions flow had caused serious physical and mental sickness to me and many in the Western world. For example, over the last decades serious depression and anxiety have risen every year in the Western world. If we look at the etymology of the word *depression*, we find that

28 “Oxford Languages and Google - English.” (2023) languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/. Geopend op 12 October. 2022.

it originates from the Latin verb *deprimere*, which means “to press down” (Oxford Languages, 2023).<sup>28</sup> Whether it is because someone doesn’t feel seen or heard in a relationship, or loneliness, an unfulfilling job, not going out to a natural environment much, not having the sense that you can make a change, ect: suppressing emotions has serious consequences on the quality of living (Hari, 2019).<sup>29</sup> To press down our emotions is what we learn from a child's age on. As a child, I would physically get hot when I was angry and my mom would put me under a cold shower to cool me down. And so I developed the neuroconnections that certain emotions would be punished and thereby should not be expressed. With all the traumatic consequences that gave me anger attacks later in life.

29 [TED]. (2019, October 11). *This could be why you're depressed or anxious* | Johann Hari [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved October 3, 2022, from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB5IX-np5fE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB5IX-np5fE)



In the human body, only 10% are human cells, 90% are bacteria cells. (Sender et al., 2016)<sup>30</sup> Crazy right? Who is actually living your body? Who is creating and satisfying your body's needs? Who is thinking your thoughts? I wish I could feel it in my gut right now but I'm still really head heavy: neurologically gravitated. Listening to your gut feeling is NOT unprofessional. Even though prestigious academic environments and theses like this one might consider it to be so, it's not.

30 Sender, R., Fuchs, S., & Milo, R. (2016). Revised estimates for the number of human and bacteria cells in the body. *PLoS Biology*, 14(8), e1002533. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1002533

*“Anyone who suffers from anxiety or depression should remember that an unhappy gut can be the cause of an unhappy mind. ... We should not always blame depression on the brain or on our life circumstances - there is much more to us than that.” (Enders, 2015).<sup>31</sup>*

Giulia Enders writes in one of my favourite books. Enders is a proponent for creating a feeling of charm and compassion for the working of the digestive system that opened, in my personal case, new neural pathways for a more communicative way of being with the gut feelings. Enders shows how important our digestive system is for our mental well-being and breaks through taboos, like talking about poop. To express how one feels —anxious, relaxed, tense— I am an advocate for opening the conversation about poop and farts—diarrhoea, nice sausage, constipation—. I struggled mainly with diarrhoea over the last years.



Splash

<sup>31</sup> Enders, G. (2015). *Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ*. Greystone Books.



*These days I am proud  
of every solid chocolate  
cookie dough roll I leave  
in the toilet bowl.*





The gut of a human is 40 times the area of its skin surface (Sender et al., 2016).<sup>32</sup> This makes the human body very receptive to what it ingests. In this process, the human brain and gut are closely connected. Nerves communicate from head to belly and the other way around. A general belief is that the brain makes the comments and the body follows up. But really, only 10 % of the nerves connecting the two organs communicate from brain to intestines. The other 90% of the nerves communicate from the intestines to the brain. These nerves enter areas in the brain for emotional processing, morality, fear and self awareness (Sender et al., 2016).<sup>32</sup> Mental health and gut health are incredibly closely related. They might be the same thing.

Scientific studies have explored the idea that imbalances in the gut microbiome—dysbiosis—might impact the brain and

32 Sender, R., Fuchs, S., & Milo, R. (2016, August 19). *Revised Estimates for the Number of Human and Bacteria Cells in the Body*. NCBI. Retrieved September 28, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4991899/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4991899/)

contribute to the development or exacerbation of psychiatric disorders, including psychosis (Nuncio-Mora, 2023).<sup>33</sup> The day after I almost died, I got a severe salt poisoning. My eyes rolled out of sight and all I could do was growling in spasm. I couldn't communicate and some parts in my memory are blank. I got into a psychosis. In psychosis, the body goes into overdrive because the gut microbiome can't make certain hormones, including those who help you to sleep. Thus, resulting in insomnia. This is what can happen to humans who take an antibiotic cure (Essali & Miller, 2020).<sup>34</sup> In my personal case, if it wasn't the salt killing my entire intestinal habitat, that for sure, it was the fact that I did not eat and thus did feed my microbes. I had to start over again growing my inner residents population from the ground up.

33 Nuncio-Mora, L. (2023, June 20). *The Role of the Microbiome in First Episode of Psychosis*. MDPI. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from [www.mdpi.com/2227-9059/11/6/1770](http://www.mdpi.com/2227-9059/11/6/1770)

This journey is filled with challenges—depression, anxiety, panic attacks—yet, just like our wonderful stinky brown mass: I came out the other end.

As history remembers Rumi, an Arabic poet of the 13th century, said:

*“There is a voice that talks without words. Listen.”(Rumi).<sup>35</sup>*

When I look inwards, like really, really close, I find that **I am my gut**: microbes, cells, atoms, electrons, protons, and those really are just tiny dots of light. like everything else is. If I look deep within, I might hear the belonging and guidance my inner climate is longing for.

<sup>34</sup> Esali, N., & Miller, B. J. (2020, September 19). *Psychosis as an adverse effect of antibiotics*. NCBI. Retrieved November 6, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8474525/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8474525/)

<sup>35</sup> Rumi. (2022, September 27). *Inside timer*. [insidetimer.com](http://insidetimer.com). Retrieved September 27, 2022, from [insidetimer.com](http://insidetimer.com)

Scientist and writer Giulia Enders is of the opinion that nowadays society likes to put labels onto mental or emotional "dysfunction".

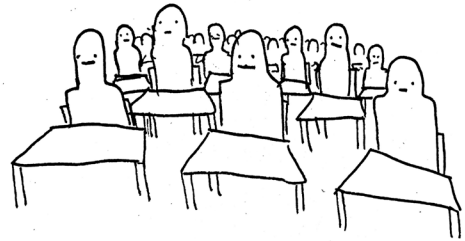
High sensitivity, borderline personality disorder, anxiety disorders, etc. What if all these labels are signs of the body? How would the human perspective on mental health change if medical science would stop insulting our gut intelligence by just saying that humans with "disorders" are mad, sick or just a malfunction, like it's a glitch in a computer? What if we engage in a two way dialogue? Will the gut finally be free to tell us what's worth living for?

More and more children and adults are diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions— ADHD, autism, dyscalcula-

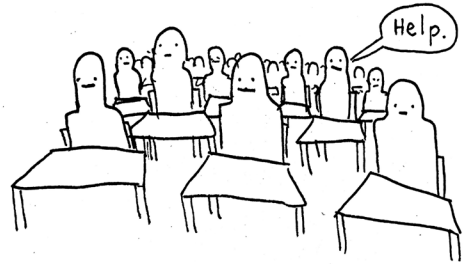
lia, dyslexia, OCD to name a few—. This shows how the educational system is suboptimal for development for this number of children and adults, in my opinion. Sitting and quietly listening in a white cube hours and hours at the time. Some people do not benefit from audible or reading as learning sources alone, and this denies lots of people's qualities to develop their unique way of intellectual growth. People with neurodivergent conditions try to fit in—a reason to develop depression and anxiety (Syharat et al., 2023)<sup>36</sup>—is judgemental for their own mental, emotional and physical health. Besides, the stigma on neurodivergency is also harmful for the overall health of the planet. In my opinion, Industrialising human body movement is an expression of the overall industrialization of the planet.

36 Syharat, C. M., Hain, A., Zaghi, A. E., Gabriel, R., & Berdanier, C. G. P. (2023, June 15). *Experiences of neurodivergent students in graduate STEM programs*. NCBI. Retrieved October 18, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10311419/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10311419/)









Physical activity and movement have been linked with a range of psychosocial benefits, including lowered anxiety levels, and higher self-esteem (Robinson et al., 2010).<sup>37</sup> These are especially beneficial for neurodivergent humans that have to adjust into the discomfort of the educational structure. Dyslexic children can learn to read excellently by looking at the same letters over and over while jumping on a minitrampoline (Anderson, 2020).<sup>38</sup> Moreover, it supports the physical and emotional well being of other neurodivergencies like dyspraxia (Anderson, 2020, ch. 5), autism (Anderson, 2020, ch. 3) and learning difficulties (Anderson, 2020, ch. 4). Personally I think every human body would benefit from bouncing movement. It will give a little shake to one's organs and get the bowels moving. Doesn't it sound fun? Do you remember the feeling of jumping on a trampoline? The split second you are in the air, that you are free

and you smile? I wish bodies of all ages could continuously experience this. Fun movements can improve everyone's learning experience, in my opinion.



37 Robinson, L. E., & Wadsworth, D. D. (2010). Stepping toward physical activity requirements: Integrating pedometers into early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(2), 95-102.

38 Anderson, A. (2020). *Therapeutic Trampolining for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs: A Practical Guide to Supporting Emotional and Physical Wellbeing (Vol. Trampolining - Supporting Emotional and Physical Wellbeing)*. Taylor & Francis. [bit.ly/3HnFgcv](https://bit.ly/3HnFgcv)

Research has shown that uninterrupted classroom sitting increases discomfort and sleepiness among students (Hosteng et al., 2019).<sup>39</sup> And moreover, society is aware of the health complications that come from too much sitting that include the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes (Owen et al., 2012)<sup>40</sup> and the number one cause of death globally: cardiovascular diseases (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020).<sup>41</sup> Not even speaking of the back pain issues involved. Assuming that we, as a collective species, want to continue living in a preferably healthy and longevity promoting manner, why is the educational system still requiring children to curb their vibrancy, livelihood and (emotional) expression, decreasing their ability to learn and increasing their risk of disease?

39 Hosteng, K. R., Reichter, A. P., Simmering, J. E., & Carr, L. J. (2019, July 13). *Uninterrupted Classroom Sitting is Associated with Increased Discomfort and Sleepiness Among College Students*. NCBI. Retrieved October 10, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6679029/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6679029/)

Neurodivergent people have, as the name implies, a brain that works differently than is considered typical. “Precisely because they are so associative and their thoughts go in all directions” says Bianca Boyer, psychologist (Universiteit Leiden, 2023).<sup>42</sup> “they end up in places where neurotypical people do not end up. This means that they often come up with an insight or discovery that no one had thought of yet.” A neurotypical human would think “what does that have to do with anything?” but as one thinks about it a little longer one realises, “hey! Yes, this is it!”. Could these kinds of neurodivergent thought processes provide what is needed for solutions of the climate crisis?

40 Owen, N., Healy, G. N., Matthews, C. E., & Dunstan, D. W. (2012, July 25). *Too Much Sitting: The Population-Health Science of Sedentary Behavior*. NCBI. Retrieved October 10, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3404815/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3404815/)

41 World Health Organization (WHO). (2020, December 9). *The top 10 causes of death*. World Health Organization (WHO). Retrieved October 10, 2023, from [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death)

Either way, It is essential society has healthy humans that can think a-typically. Neurodiversity is like biodiversity: It is essential for a healthy ecosystem and society.

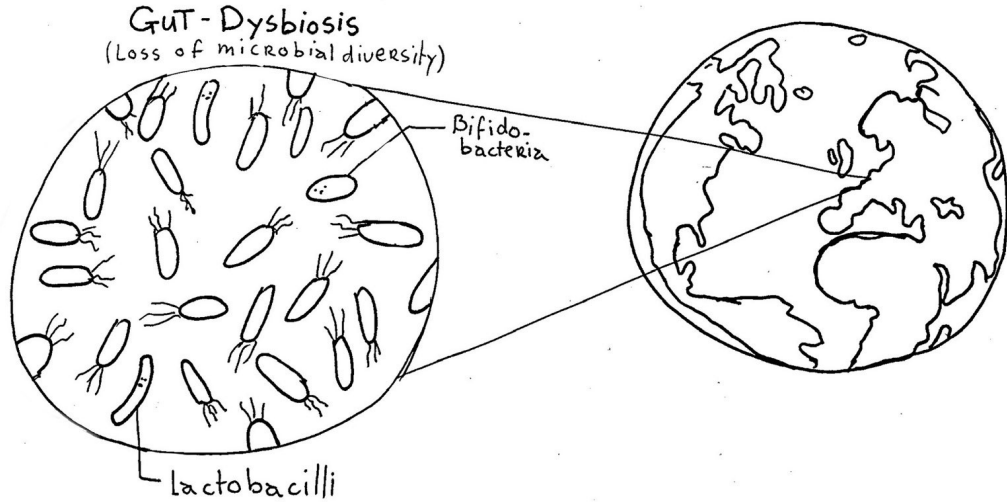
Diversity is important, in ecosystems, in social settings, in food consumption, in gut health. When we have too much of one bacteria overgrowing you are likely to experience disease. Isn't it strange that on a society wide level, still many neurodivergent people try to fit in? Trying to be one of the same old bacteria, while we need people to be their own unique truths, for the health of the figurative microbiome of earth for its sake.

42 *Universiteit Leiden. (2023, November 7). Bianca Boyer over perfectionisme, overprikkeling en creativiteit bij ADHD. Universiteit Leiden. Retrieved January 2, 2024, from [www.universiteitleiden.nl/in-de-media/2023/11/bianca-boyer-over-waarom-mensen-met-adhd-vaak-overprikkeld-zijn](http://www.universiteitleiden.nl/in-de-media/2023/11/bianca-boyer-over-waarom-mensen-met-adhd-vaak-overprikkeld-zijn)*









As discussed, mental illness can be influenced by the gut bacterial imbalances. Mental illness being all too common in nowadays society is a symptom of a much bigger problem. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depressive disorders. Depressive symptoms, which affected approximately 193 million individuals worldwide, saw an increase to 246 million, marking a rise of approximately 28%. Similarly, the number of people affected by anxiety disorders rose from around 298 million to 374 million, reflecting a 25% increase (Santomauro, 2021).<sup>43</sup> Among residents in the United States, young adults, age 18 to 25, exhibited the highest incidence of mental health conditions at 30.6% (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023).<sup>44</sup> Worldwide this phenomenon is increasing. As an experienced expert of mental illness, I know how lonely, confusing and painful

it is to have to deal with. That 3 in every 10 young adults in the US has to go through this is a symptom of a much bigger problem. I refer it back to the unhealthy state of the earth and the way we live our lives: disconnected from each other, divide, war, fear and confusion. This can be seen in the way humans treat the earth itself, developing healthy habits and addiction.

<sup>43</sup> Santomauro, D. F. (2021, November 6). *Global prevalence and burden of depressive and anxiety disorders in 204 countries and territories in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic*. *The Lancet*. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02143-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02143-7)

<sup>44</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. (2023, March). *NIMH » Mental Illness*. NIMH. Retrieved November 8, 2023, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>



The definition of *education* by Oxford Languages means: “the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.” (Oxford Languages, 2023).<sup>45</sup> 77% of those who are employed all around the globe say they have experienced burnout at their current job. 91% believe that uncontrollable stress or frustration affects the quality of their job, and 83% say that burnout may harm personal relationships (Apollo Technical LLC, 2023).<sup>46</sup> The percentage of students with burnout symptoms (defined as “physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion accompanied by decreased motivation and negative attitudes toward oneself and others.”) is growing every year as well (Sanchez, 2023).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> “Oxford Languages and Google - English.” *languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-enl*. Geopend op 28 nov. 2022.

With environmental issues, climate space and the damage that is being done to the natural environment I feel very closely related to its healing.

The problem here is, and I dare say this counts for all educational institutes, that students are not being taught some of the essentials of being alive. They rather only be taught the parts that keep capitalist society rolling and citizens working, producing and stressing like it's the essence of life.

*And how could it be any other way, as we all, as a human species, are nearly expressions of the earth itself?*

<sup>46</sup> Apollo Technical LLC. (2023, October 30). *STARTLING REMOTE WORK BURNOUT STATISTICS*. Apollo Technical. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from [www.apollotechnical.com/remote-work-burnout-statistics/](http://www.apollotechnical.com/remote-work-burnout-statistics/).%20Geopend%20op%2028%20nov..%202022.

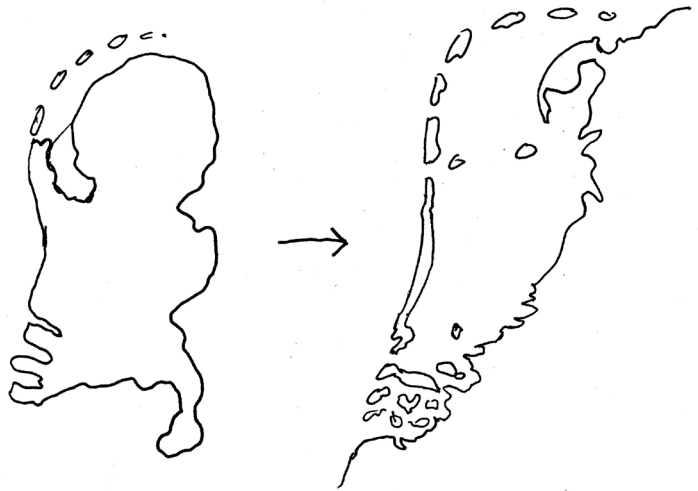
<sup>47</sup> Sanchez, O. (2023, October 30). *Burnout symptoms increasing among college students*. The Hechinger Report. Retrieved november 28, 2022, from [hechingerreport.org/burnout-symptoms-increasing-among-college-student](http://hechingerreport.org/burnout-symptoms-increasing-among-college-student)

This starts from the first day of primary school. If things continue like they do now, The Hague in the Netherlands, where my academy is, will be underwater (Wageningen University, 2020).<sup>48</sup> What is the goal of the university? Is it to produce as much as possible? to keep up with all the new developments? Is it to make their students productive producers? And if yes, why? Is it status, power and money?



<sup>48</sup> Wageningen University. (2020). *Nederland in 2120*. Wageningen University & Research. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from [www.wur.nl/nl/dossiers/dossier/nederland-in-2120.htm](http://www.wur.nl/nl/dossiers/dossier/nederland-in-2120.htm)





To make a global change for the better institutes should start to value students on their **intention, moral** and **vision**. I am of the opinion that this should be graded higher than anything else.

The core of the education system this is what has to be incorporated to create a better learning environment, in my personal believe:

- *A student should be rewarded for sustainable 'production' and mindset.*
- *a student should be rewarded for their mental wellbeing and self care practice.*
- *a student should be rewarded for their sustainability of practice on a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level.*

At the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, The Netherlands, I helped to set up the initiative of the *Green Office*: An organisation, innovative and movement by students among universities internationally to make these institutions more sustainable. "Our vision as the Green Office Movement is that higher education institutions become catalysts for sustainability. This means that: Our mission is to institutionalise sustainability in higher education, by integrating sustainability in all the above-mentioned domains." (Green Office Movement, 2023).<sup>49</sup> as stated on their website. This intention is a step out of the damaging results of capitalism, from my understanding.

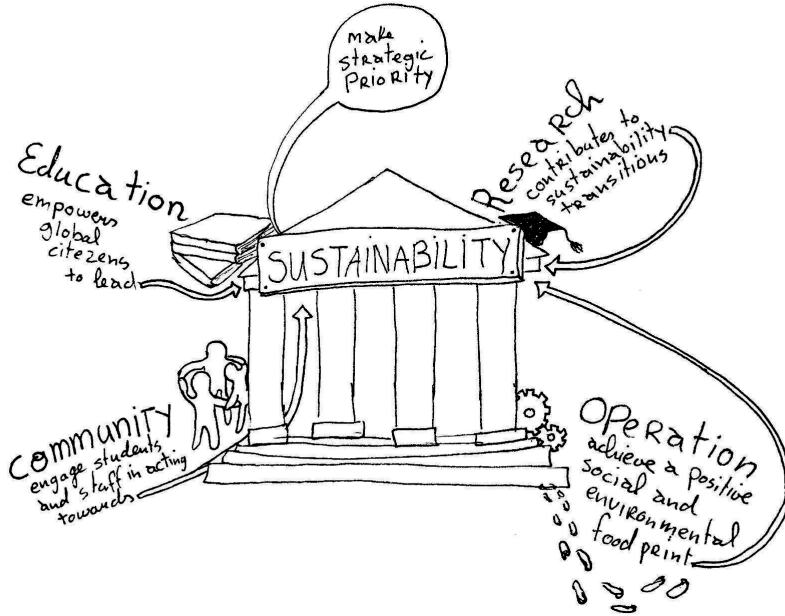
The academic institutes should reconsider their intent in this world, in my personal view. Having young minds to make changes for the future is a movement for the better.



This kind of *movement of mind* is taking action for the wellbeing of their **students**, the wellbeing of **society** and the wellbeing of the **planet**. By changing the inner climates — education and student well being —, a change to the outer climate. —societies structure and capitalistic morals— will be made.

Our current education system was established during the industrial revolution: Standardisation, Mass Education system with a one-size-fits-all approach. Allowing children to accumulate as much knowledge as possible by having them sit still and subjecting their minds to a continuous stream of information is akin to treating children as factories that receive a continuous flow of fossil fuel for the profitability of plastic hairbrushes. It's very disheartening that such valuable resources are used to sustain a society with a gar-

49 *Green Office Movement. (2023, April 24). Start your Sustainability Office and join the Green Office Movement. The Green Office Movement. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from [www.greenofficemovement.org/](http://www.greenofficemovement.org/)*



bage-moral compass. Therefore, it's also essential that the education industry is addressed. As we are becoming aware that profit and mass production is not what feels good for our inner and outer climates, thus to pass this Earth on to future generations. It is burning out our precious reserves.

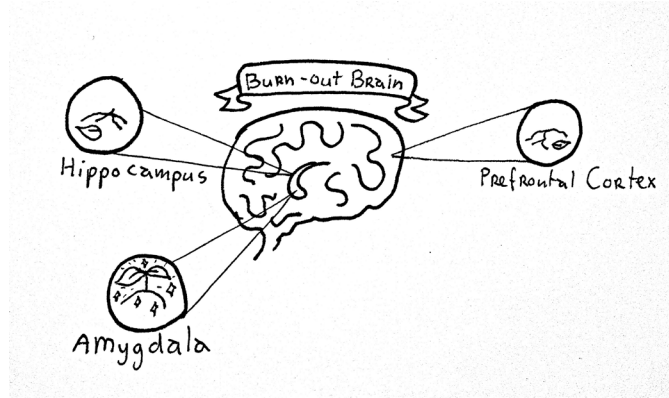
I had a burn out at the age of 20. If you, like me, also heard as a child not to cry, that there “is nothing to be afraid of”, not to be angry, and get candy when you are sad to shut you up, you might also get conditioned to shut down your emotions and burn out. Or how the Swedish defined it, *stress related exhaustion syndrome* (Grossi, 2015).<sup>50</sup> A burn-out brain is damaged. The brain volume literally shrinks, according to neurologist Brankele Frank (Frank,2023).<sup>51</sup> Pretty intense. Especially the areas related to thinking—the

prefrontal cortex— memory and learning—in the hippocampus. The nerve cells there normally all have branches with which they make connections with other nerve cells. Those twigs get shrivelled—shrivelled neurons. Burned out people and I can think and remember less. There are also areas where brain cells actually continue growing more extended branches: in the amygdala's—the emotional nuclei—. Resulting in becoming more emotional and sensitive. This syndrome makes, through altered brain growth and damage, humans more emotional. It's a natural process that makes earth citizens more sensitive with every person who runs down.

50 Grossi, G. (2015). *Stress-related exhaustion disorder – clinical manifestation of burnout?* *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*. Retrieved December 4, 2023, from [stressmottagningen.se/wp-content/uploads/Grossi\\_et\\_al-Scandinavian\\_Journal\\_of\\_Psychology.pdf](http://stressmottagningen.se/wp-content/uploads/Grossi_et_al-Scandinavian_Journal_of_Psychology.pdf)

51 Frank, B. (2023). *Over de kop (1st ed.)*. *Das Mag Uitgeverij B.V.*

Coming back to burning up precious reserves, let's talk about the consumption of some of our oceanic beings: fish. If I asked you “How big is an anchovy?”, you may answer with “very small”. Anchovy bought a tiny can. In Italy they are eaten as 3 centimetre wormies on top of pizza. In Japan you find hundreds of them, very small, dried in snack-size plastic packaging. Only recently I learned that this fish in adult size should be 10-25 cm long (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1999).<sup>52</sup>



52 *Encyclopedia Britannica. (1999, July 23). Anchovy | Mediterranean, Forage Fish, Small Fish. Britannica. Retrieved September 9, 2023, from www.britannica.com/animallanchovy*

Due to overfishing, anchovy started to be fished in a much younger—thus small—state. Seas like the Mediterranean Sea became warm water pools due to rising temperatures. Thus, anchovies are no longer able to survive there. Countries like France, Italy and the Netherlands import their sardines from Peru for their yearly traditional harvest festivals revolving around this small fish (Possel, 2023).<sup>53</sup> This is one example of the gaining mentality of industrial, capitalist countries. The idea these regions have of having the right to take resources from other regions is false. By taking from another, one creates disbalance between them. Centuries of this process produced an economy that is overproducing the gaining region, and pollution, harming the land, nature and humans of the region that it is taken from. The roots of the climate crisis lie in colonialism, capitalism and expansionism. To re-find equality between humans and harmony

of the climate, this should be recognized and changed.

Related to this is war. Today's wars are about resources. Waging war is extremely polluting. It's a destructor of land, nature and people. Destruction is a terrible method for resolving conflict. An example of many globally: When the European colonialists exterminated the bison in North America (WWF, n.d.)<sup>54</sup>, the original population had no chance to stand in their power: the precious balance sheet of their country had been destroyed. In this way the European colonialists could keep this group of people under their thumb. Indigenous people know how to care for nature to maintain balance. Colonialism has disrupted this balance.

The authors of the book “Who do we want to care for?”

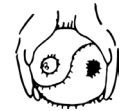
53

Possel, P. (2023, september 4). *Ansjovis, een kleine vis met een groot verhaal*. Voorproevers VRT max Radio 1. Retrieved September 9, 2023, from [www.vrt.be/vrtmax/podcasts/radio1/v/voorproevers/2/petra-possel-over-de-ansjovis--een-kleine-vis-met-een-groot-verb/](http://www.vrt.be/vrtmax/podcasts/radio1/v/voorproevers/2/petra-possel-over-de-ansjovis--een-kleine-vis-met-een-groot-verb/)

Ecofeminism as a source of inspiration” Philsan Osman, Marie-Monique Franssen and Dirk Holemans describe here *the economy of the enough* (Holemans et al., 2021)<sup>55</sup> This includes:

- *fair distribution of access and use of resources within the boundaries of the planet,*
- *fair distribution of greenhouse gas emissions and meeting the needs of one community can never be at the expense of another community.*

This means that in countries like the Netherlands we will have to do with less.



<sup>54</sup> WWF. (n.d.). How bison help shape the Northern Great Plains | Pages. WWF. Retrieved November 20, 2023, from <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/how-bison-help-shape-the-northern-great-plains>

<sup>55</sup> Holemans, D., Franssen, M.-M., & Osman, P. (2021). *Voor wie willen we zorgen? ecofeminisme als inspiratiebron*. EPO.

By engaging in conflict resolution through fair distribution of resources one can find more harmony in one's relationship with other humans, but also, with all other beings, nature and the climate.

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p 154)<sup>56</sup> This is what psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk wrote in the famous book *The Body Keeps the Score*. Community is a necessity for well being. If we believe the world around us is filled with enemies, we feel unsafe. Theoretical physicist Albert Einstein is said to have remarked that

*“the most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe.”* (Yusim, 2017).<sup>57</sup>

Einstein thought that humans themselves are responsible for deciding if we live in a world with friends or enemies. Something I experienced by living in a community at the Zen Buddhist monastery is one of how interconnectedness with anyone - young, old, sick, healthy, poor, rich, etc- or any thing - animals, insects, flowers, stones, food, the sky, the wind- and most importantly, with myself. It is only by befriending oneself that we can start becoming friends with others.

56 Van der Kolk, B. A. (2015). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Penguin Publishing Group.

57 Yusim, A. (2017). *Fulfilled: How the Science of Spirituality Can Help You Live a Happier, More Meaningful Life*. Grand Central Publishing.

### **Befriending - Summary**

This chapter discussed the necessity of befriending the atmospheres inside and outside our physical body so one can learn to understand the needs of the other. By befriending oneself and others one can be at ease with one's decisions and life choices that can brighten the life beyond the separate self.

### **Becoming**



When individuals meet with their own contemptuous inner climates, and befriend their microscopic selves, this thesis ends with the third state: becoming. By zooming out to see the big picture, it's where one brings it all together and makes it whole. One can become more than the separate self.

One's body is moving through space. One can strive to be present in the here and now. Move according to how the body wants. To let the body move oneself. Moving one's body into the realisation that:



*There is no time, just space.*

Time is a concept humans came up with to measure changes in space. I am reflecting on ologist and philosopher David Abram's text from 1997 called *The Spell of the Sensuous*, chapter *Mindful Life of The Body*. David Abram speaks here about being with your surroundings. About adjusting to surroundings, growing into or changing according to the environment. It's an intimate process that most of the time we are unaware of. An example that illustrates this intimacy well is the process of eating.

Time is a concept humans came up with to measure changes in

I invite you to do a thought experiment. If you please, you may now mentally prepare a meal. You can decide whatever food you prefer to think of. Cook it, bake it, assemble it, to your preference and place it in front of you. Give your thanks to it and then, start eating.

At what moment in this process does the food become you?

Is it at the moment that it is in your large intestine, where your microbiome starts eating their nutrients from your food?

Is it in the small intestine where you take in micronutrients and water from the food?

Is it in the stomach where the acid breaks down the structure of the food?

Is it in the oesophagus, the pipe where it enters your digestive tract?

Is it in your mouth where the teeth break down the food in smaller pieces and release enzymes that start the digestive process?

Or is it already part of you when you thank the food for its nourishment?

Is it already part of you when it's in front of you?

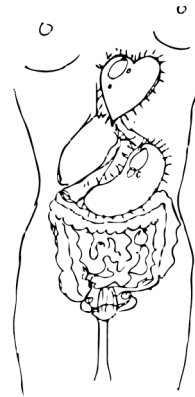
In the same room?

Or when you bought it?

For me, this process is about rooting back into the earth. It could feel like the beetroot buried in the soil of my vegetable patch is already part of me.

Maybe even when she is not yet a beetroot,

but still a seed?



*“By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence—to the way of this stone, or tree, or table—as the other seems to adjust itself to my own style and sensitivity.*

*In this manner the simplest thing may become a world for me, as, conversely, the thing or being comes to take its place more deeply in my world.*

*It’s a matter of what I am able to identify with. Becoming one with what surrounds that what is inside.”*

*(Abram, 1997, p. 37-41)<sup>58</sup>*

58 Abram, D. (1997). *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1st ed. page 37-41). Vintage books.

My method of “becoming one with what surrounds that what is inside” is to first start to become one with the physical body experience. Then becoming one with people, other beings, objects and spaces. And then, becoming one with the climate. I am part of the climate, I am an expression of earth energy, I am earth. You are earth. We are earth. We are changing in space, as we form into our position and order in the universe. We do call this intimate process ‘passing time’, but really all it is, is changing space.

Every living creature is part of the energy of the earth, this is what we could conclude when we look into quantum physics’s research, that proves any matter to be made out of the same material: atoms. Atoms that are all charged with a waving energy that can be transmitted to one thing or being to the other (French, 2018).<sup>59</sup>

59 French, A.P. (2018). *An Introduction to Quantum Physics*. CRC Press. [books.google.co.jp/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=53laDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT9&dq=quantum+physics&ots=wW4LVnELsK&sig=QwoNywW28O-JCDJxWw8ihwym7hXA&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=quantum%20physics&f=false](https://books.google.co.jp/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=53laDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT9&dq=quantum+physics&ots=wW4LVnELsK&sig=QwoNywW28O-JCDJxWw8ihwym7hXA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=quantum%20physics&f=false)

*All is an interconnective graceful flow of giving and receiving.*

To come back to the earlier mention

of *there is no time, just space*, this realisation was already stated by Albert Einstein. He once wrote:

*“People like us who believe in physics know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.” (Flatow, 2013).<sup>60</sup>*

Though personally, I like to perceive it not as an illusion, but rather as a way of measurement. calculating amount of the waves atoms make. I think of it as a way to measure how atomic energy in space changes: over time.

60 Flatow, I. (2013, May 17). *Resetting the Theory of Time*. NPR. Retrieved October 2, 2023, from [www.npr.org/2013/05/17/1184775924/resetting-the-theory-of-time](http://www.npr.org/2013/05/17/1184775924/resetting-the-theory-of-time)

Breathe in. Breathe out. Being in the present moment shows us how we are constantly in motion. We are in a constant movement if we want or not, of a continuous flow of moments that happen one after the other. Waves of energy that move through us like the ongoing waves of the ocean. Breathing in. Breathing out.

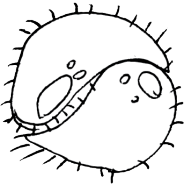
In extension of this I like to conclude with challenging this believe to something Ahmed has to say in her text in *Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*:

*“Philosophy is a thing that is the same as loving knowledge: a love of knowledge which is the same thing as telling the difference between what you know and don’t know, which is the same thing as smelling the difference between the friend and the foe.” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 38-55)<sup>61</sup>*

Ahmed’s statement tells me about how things inherently are not different from each other. All that is is one whole entity, one being. The final reflection I like to make is that all that is thought of by my head, all the concepts I make and all the writing I just wrote are inconclusive and irrelevant. I will now leave my headspace and enter back into my bodily sensation to feel the ever changing truth of my own existence.

61 Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. New York, Routledge, p. 38-55.

### Becoming - Summary



This third chapter looked at the bigger picture. It looked at how personal expression of one's inner climate is related to the outer climate, as every body is connected to the climate by a process that is beyond time.

## Conclusion



The research aimed to convey that the whole earth is connected. From a microbial level to a planetary one, together it's creating what is life. The central questions for this research were as follows:

How can the inner climate of the body help harmonise the outer climate of earth ?

By moving our body in a way that is kind towards ourselves, others and our environment, humankind can make the little changes that will make a big difference.

By practising the explored methods of breathing, natural emotional expression, graceful movement one can *meet* one's own unique needs, so one can be with others from a place of equality.

Being aware of the health of the bacteria in one's gut, by acknowledging neurodiversity and the educational, cultural and global systems we are part of, one can *befriend* the environment around you.

At the moment one is at ease with its environment, one may realise that as part of the globe, one is the globe and one can *become* the earth. Thus, one can make the changes that benefit one's health and that of the climate. Like Mahatma Gandhi worded it:

*being the change  
you like to see in the world is the only thing  
you can do.*

Together, it's time for humanity, we as the planet, have to make a decision. Do we want to continue to deplete our bodies and minds? Or will we start loving enough to move harmoniously with ourselves, other beings and the planet? The tools discussed in this thesis are all there to help you to come to a physical, mental and emotional state that holds space for meditation. Once you're there, you are

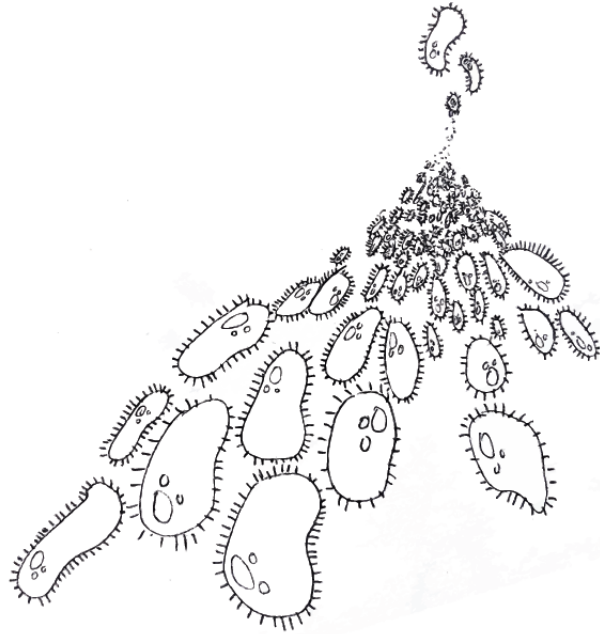
not harming yourself or other beings. not contributing to climate change. Just being—breathing—gives the body, one's microbodies, time to heal. This non doing gives time to earth to heal herself. Just like with our own body, earth knows best what she needs. As earlier quoted: Meditation is the embodiment of the effect that the interior has on the exterior, with its many health benefits well documented in science. (Jamil, 2023)<sup>62</sup>

So, how can the inner climate help harmonise the outer climate?

*By coming home to the body.*

62           Jamil, A. (2023, June 19). *Meditation and Its Mental and Physical Health Benefits in 2023*. NCBI. Retrieved November 10, 2023, from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10355843/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10355843/)





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Thank you for reading

**Harmonious inner and outer Climates**

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